

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET
UPDATED--OCTOBER 4, 2013

Meeting Date: October 10, 2013

Agenda Item: Proposed Final Fishing Regulation Changes for 2014

Division: Fish and Wildlife (Fisheries)

Action Needed: Approval of Final Rule

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 minutes

Background. The fishing regulation process is based on a four-year cycle, where the first year of each cycle is dedicated to actively soliciting ideas for changes from the public. During the following three years of the cycle ("off-cycle" years), ideas are only solicited internally from FWP biologists, fish managers and enforcement personnel. Regulations are proposed to the commission during off-cycle years only if they meet certain criteria: achieve enforcement needs, provide clarification, are important for species conservation, are removing regulations no longer relevant, or fulfill direction provided in management plans. The fishing regulation proposals for 2014 are an off-cycle year; the next year with full public involvement will be 2016.

Public Involvement Process & Results. Following approval of these proposed regulations, they were posted on the FWP website for public comment from August 13-September 12. A total of 66 comments were received within the comment period. All proposals received more support than opposition: Little Bitterroot Lake bass regulation (8 in support, 1 opposed), North Fork Flathead trout hybrid regulations (11 in support, 6 opposed), Warm Springs Creek/Silver Lake bull trout closures (3 in support, 1 opposed), Canyon Ferry Reservoir regulations (12 in support of the perch regulation, 3 opposed; 10 in support of the walleye regulation, 6 opposed), Hauser Reservoir regulations (7 in support of the perch regulation, 2 opposed; 6 in support of the walleye regulation, 2 opposed), Holter walleye regulation (8 in support and 4 opposed). The Pelican Point Pond proposal received no comments, and 18 individuals provided comments not specific to any of the proposals.

Alternatives and Analysis. The proposed regulation changes for 2014 list each proposal individually, and indicate if they are a new regulation or a change or deletion of an existing regulation. A summary of the public comments received is then provided for each proposed change, followed by the FWP response and rationale.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale. FWP has withdrawn one proposal (North Fork Flathead), and is recommending another with modifications (Silver Lake), and the remaining regulations without changes. The North Fork trout hybrid proposal is withdrawn due to a variety of issues expressed in the comments; FWP will work with commenters (including Glacier National Park) to address their concerns before proposing this regulation again. The proposed closure distance on Silver Lake for bull trout was reduced in response to the comment that it impacts fishing opportunity there. In response to those opposing the changes in the Missouri Reservoirs, FWP clarified the requirements of the Management Plan, the impacts of other predators on perch populations, and expectations of how the regulations will affect the size structure of the walleye populations. The Little Bitterroot Lake proposal was well supported, but additional information was provided to address issues raised by the one opposing commenter. The Pelican Point Pond proposal received no comments, and FWP cites the original rationale for continuing to support adoption of this proposal. The comments received which were unrelated to proposed changes will be forwarded to staff for consideration at a future time.

Proposed Motion

I move to adopt FWP's proposed final regulation changes for the 2014 fishing season.